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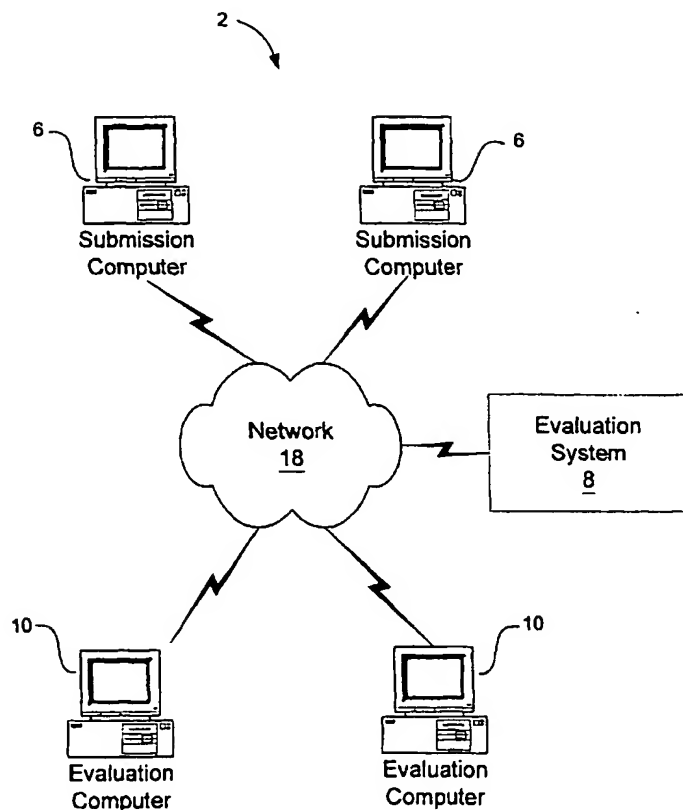
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[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: **IDEA CAPTURE AND EVALUATION**



(57) Abstract: The invention is directed to systems and techniques for capturing and evaluating ideas in a widely distributed organization, such as a global corporation. The invention allows the organization to define a hierarchical evaluation process for identifying ideas having the highest potential for success. The evaluation system includes a database to store a description and a current stage for each idea. In addition, the database stores configuration data that defines the number of evaluation stages and corresponding evaluation criteria for each stage. During evaluation, a web server generates an evaluation screen as a function of the current stage of the idea. Evaluation software executes in an operating environment of the web server and selects one or more evaluators at each stage as a function of the evaluator's area of expertise. The ideas propagate through the various evaluation stages based on whether the evaluators approve or reject the idea.



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## IDEA CAPTURE AND EVALUATION

### TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to computer-implemented techniques for capturing and evaluating ideas in a distributed environment.

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### BACKGROUND

Large organizations, such as global companies, often face significant challenges in identifying and evaluating areas of improvement and potential growth. Notably, significant challenges arise in collecting and managing input from the myriad of sources such as customers, salespeople, field technicians, product development engineers, central research scientists and executives. Distilling the most promising ideas from these sources poses another level of challenges.

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### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In general, the invention is directed to systems and techniques for capturing and evaluating ideas in a widely distributed organization, such as a global corporation. The invention allows the organization to define a hierarchical evaluation process for identifying ideas having the highest potential for success. The organization can tailor the hierarchical evaluation process such that at each stage the proposed idea is examined from a different business perspective, such as technical feasibility, market opportunity, logistical, legal and regulatory. Furthermore, the organization can define the evaluation process to reflect its current business evaluation procedures and strategies, thereby automating and facilitating the identification of innovative, transformational ideas that can generate value for the organization.

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In one aspect, the invention is directed to an evaluation system that includes a database to store a description and a current stage for each idea. In addition, the database stores configuration data that defines the number of evaluation stages and corresponding evaluation criteria for each stage. A web server coupled to the database generates an evaluation screen, such as a web page, as a function of the

current stage the idea. Evaluation executes in an operating environment of the web server and selects one or more evaluators at each stage as a function of each evaluator's area of expertise. The evaluation software modifies the current stage of the idea based on evaluation data received from the selected evaluators.

5           According to another aspect, the invention is directed to a method for capturing and evaluating ideas in which configuration data, defining a number of evaluation stages and corresponding evaluation criteria, is stored in a database. Input data describing an idea is received over a network such as a local area network, wide area network or even the Internet. Evaluation screens, such as web  
10       pages, are generated as a function of the evaluation stage of the idea under consideration. The evaluation screen provides an interface by which an evaluator enters evaluation data. The stage of the idea under consideration is modified as a function of the evaluation data.

          According to another aspect, the invention is directed to a computer-  
15       readable medium having data structures stored thereon. The data structures include an idea data structure to store a description of an idea, an evaluator data structure to store identities of evaluators authorized to evaluate the idea and a configuration data structure to store configuration data defining a hierarchical evaluation process.

20           Various embodiments of the invention are set forth in the accompanying drawings and the description below. Other features and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the description, the drawings, and the claims.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

          Figure 1 is a block diagram illustrating a system for capturing and  
25       evaluating ideas.

          Figure 2 is a block diagram illustrating the idea evaluation system in further detail.

          Figure 3 is a block diagram illustrating an example hierarchical evaluation  
process.

30           Figure 4 is a flow chart illustrating one example implementation of a process to capture and evaluate ideas according to the invention.

          Figure 5 illustrates an exemplary idea capture screen.

Figure 6 illustrates an exemplary evaluation screen.

Figure 7 is a block diagram illustrating a computer suitable for implementing the various embodiments of the invention.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

5           In general, the invention is directed to systems and techniques for capturing and evaluating ideas in a widely distributed organization, such as a global corporation. The invention provides a flexible tool by which the organization can easily define a hierarchical evaluation process for identifying ideas having the highest potential for success.

10           Figure 1 is a block diagram illustrating a system 2 for capturing and evaluating ideas. A user within the organization, such as an employee located in a regional office, interacts with submission computer 6 to describe and submit information describing an idea. For example, the user can propose an idea relating to a new product, a new technique for providing an existing service, a new product  
15   feature, a method for improving customer satisfaction or even a new business opportunity. For each idea, the user enters a variety of basic information such as a general description of the idea, the problem addressed, the date of conception, and involvement of outside parties. In addition, the user enters a variety of other information depending on the category of the idea. Submission computer 6  
20   communicates the received information to evaluation system 8 via network 18 for evaluation. The user can be any individual that has access to system 2 including internal individuals, such as salespeople, field technicians, product development engineers, central research scientists and executives, and external individuals such as customers, and business partners.

25           Evaluation system 8 allows an organization to define a hierarchical evaluation process having a number of evaluation stages and the criteria for evaluating the idea at each stage. For example, the organization can define the first stage so as to capture technical and feasibility information regarding the submitted idea. Progressively higher stages can be defined to capture marketing, financial,  
30   logistical and regulatory information. Typical evaluation criteria requested by evaluation system 8 includes, for example, benefit to the organization, market size,

market growth, competitors, barriers to entry, raw materials requirements and potential customers.

As described in detail below, evaluation system 8 further allows the organization to define a pool of designated evaluators categorized by area of  
5 expertise. As an idea progresses through each stage of the evaluation process, evaluation system 8 selects one or more evaluators that have expertise suitable for reviewing and evaluating the information captured at the particular stage. Typical evaluators may include managers, technical directors, accountants, and in-house legal counsel. In addition, external customers and business partners may be  
10 defined as evaluators. Each evaluator interacts with an evaluation computer 10 to provide focused responses regarding the idea under consideration. In order to advance to a higher stage, each evaluator must give his or her approval for the idea. Alternatively, a voting mechanism can be utilized. If the evaluators reject the idea, evaluation system 8 archives the idea for possible later review.

15 Submission computers 6 and evaluation computers 10 represent computing devices suitable for accessing idea evaluation system 8 via network 18. For example, submission computers 6 and evaluation computers 10 can be a personal computer, laptop computer, or even a personal digital assistant (PDA) such as a Palm™ organizer from Palm Inc. of Santa Clara, California. Submission  
20 computers 6 and evaluation computers 10 execute communication software, typically a web browser such as Internet Explorer™ from Microsoft Corporation of Redmond, Washington, in order to communicate with idea evaluation system 8. Network 18 represents any communication link suitable for communicating digital data, such as a wide-area network, local area network, or the Internet.

25 Figure 2 is a block diagram illustrating in further detail the evaluation system 8. Web servers 26 provide an interface for communicating with submission computer 6 and evaluation computer 10 via network 18. In one configuration, web servers 26 execute web server software, such as Internet Information Server™ from Microsoft Corporation, of Redmond, Washington. In another configuration,  
30 web servers 26 execute Websphere Application Server™ on a Domino™ Server from International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) of Armonk, New York. As such, web servers 26 provide an environment for interacting with evaluators

and idea submitters according to software modules 20, which can include Lotus scripts, Java scripts, Java Applets, Active Server Pages, web pages written in hypertext markup language (HTML) or dynamic HTML, Active X modules, and other suitable modules.

5           Software modules 20 can generally be grouped into two categories. Process configuration modules 28 include software modules for defining the evaluation process, including the number of evaluation stages in the hierarchy, the information required at each stage, and the type of evaluators to be selected at each stage. Capture and evaluation modules 24 include modules for capturing the  
10       required information from the submitter and presenting the information to the evaluators for review.

          Software modules 20 interact with a number of databases 22 including idea database 34, evaluator database 26, configuration data 30 and archive 32. Although illustrated as separate databases, idea database 34, evaluator database 36,  
15       configuration data 30 and archive 32 may be implemented as a single database, such as a relational database management system (RDBMS), provided by one or more database servers.

          Idea database 34 stores all information relating to each submitted idea including general description, stage and evaluations. Evaluator database 36 stores  
20       information for each evaluator defined by the organization including name, email address and area of expertise. Configuration data 30 stores information that defines the evaluation process defined by the organization including the number of stages, the information to capture at each stage, and the type of evaluator necessary to review the information. Archive 32 stores information for all ideas that were  
25       rejected by the evaluators.

          Evaluator database 36 stores information for a number of evaluators identified by organization for reviewing the captured information and evaluating the submitted idea. Within evaluator database 36, each evaluator is categorized based on his or her area of expertise.

30           Process configuration modules 28 allow a user, referred to herein as a process developer, to define the evaluation process for the organization. This typically involves researching the organization's current procedures and strategies

for evaluating opportunities. In addition, the process developer may research historical data and identify evaluation criteria that has been effective in evaluating new ideas. Based on this research, the process developer interacts with process configuration modules 28 to define the evaluation process. Process configuration modules 28 generate configuration data 30 in, for example, a relational database format.

In addition, process configuration modules 28 allow the organization to define a number of mechanisms for automating the evaluation process and ensuring that ideas move through the evaluation stages. For example, using process configuration 28, the process developer can define timers for triggering electronic mail messages (emails) to remind the evaluators to review a pending idea within the evaluation process or within archive 32.

Process configuration modules 28 further allow the process developer to define a number of idea categories such that capture and evaluation modules 24 require the submitter to identify a category for each idea upon submission. Process configuration modules 28 further allow the process developer to define different capture screens at the various stages for each category. In addition, evaluator database 36 can be organized by idea category such that evaluators can be selected by idea type in addition to their area of expertise. For example, the process developer may configure evaluation system 8 such that evaluators at each stage are selected from appropriate business units, subsidiaries, or product lines.

Figure 3 is a block diagram providing a high-level illustration of an example hierarchical evaluation process 38 having four evaluation stages. At each stage, evaluators provide information and ultimately approve or reject the submitted idea. Facilitator 39 is responsible for monitoring the progress of the idea through the evaluation process 40 and ensuring that the selected evaluators provide timely input. As illustrated in Figure 3, at stage 1 the idea is evaluated for technical feasibility. Typical information captured at this example stage is raw material requirements, technical specifications, and required resources. At stage 2, the idea is evaluated according to the underlying business opportunity. Typical information captured at this stage includes the size and growth of the potential market, competition and barriers to entry. At stage 3, the idea is evaluated from a



legal and regulator perspective. For example, information captured may include descriptions of patentable technologies, patents of other companies, and regulatory information. At stage 4, the organization implements a pilot project having specific goals and milestones. Based on the completion of these goals, the final  
5 evaluators, typically executives within the organization, approve or reject implementation of the proposed idea.

Figure 4 is a flow chart illustrating one implementation of a process 40 for capturing and evaluating ideas in a widely distributed organization. Initially, the process developer interacts with process configuration 28 to develop and store  
10 configuration data 30 (42). Next, evaluation system 8 receives a description of an idea from a submission computer 6 (44). More specifically, a submitter interacts with submission computer 6 and enters data describing in detail a proposed idea. Submission computer 6 transmits the data over network 18. For example, the submitter may provide the data by accessing capture and evaluation modules 24  
15 via web servers 26 using a web browser executing on submission computer 6. Capture and evaluation modules 24 receive the data via web servers 26 and update idea database 34 by storing the data and initializing the stored idea to the first stage.

Capture and evaluation modules 24 analyze the data relating to the newly  
20 submitted idea and select one or more suitable evaluators (46). Capture and evaluation modules 24 select the evaluators as a function of (1) the stage of the idea, (2) the idea category selected by the submitter and (3) the area of expertise of the evaluators.

After selecting the evaluators, evaluation system 8 receives input from the  
25 selected evaluators (48). More specifically, each evaluator interacts with one or more capture and evaluation modules 24, such as a capture screen defined in HTML, and inputs a variety of information. Each evaluator interacts with evaluation computer 10 and enters data in response to the detailed questions defined by capture and evaluation modules 24. Evaluation computer 10 transmits  
30 the data over network 18. For example, the evaluator may provide the data by accessing capture and evaluation modules 24 via web servers 26 using a web browser executing on evaluation computer 6. Capture and evaluation modules 24

receive the data via web servers 26 and update idea database 34 by storing the evaluation data.

In addition to providing evaluation data, an evaluator may direct evaluation system 8 to select an additional evaluator having a particular expertise. For example, a current evaluator may determine that more information is needed and that an evaluator of a particular type is needed. Evaluation system 8 selects a new evaluator according to the suggested type and receives the additional evaluation data (49).

Upon receiving evaluation data from all of the evaluators, each evaluator must specifically approve or reject an idea. If the evaluators rejected the idea, capture and evaluation modules 24 archive the idea data from idea database 34 to archive database 32. In order to facilitate future re-evaluation, all evaluation data is archived including the reason why the evaluators rejected the idea. Electronic mail messages are sent to facilitator 39 reminding him or her of the archived ideas.

If the evaluators approve the idea, capture and evaluation modules 24 determine whether the idea has reached the final stage (52). If not, capture and evaluation modules 24 update idea database 34 to advance the idea to the next stage and select new evaluators for another round of evaluation (54). If the idea has reached the last stage, capture and evaluation modules 24 update idea database to reflect that the current idea has traversed the evaluation hierarchy and has been approved for implementation.

Figure 5 illustrates an exemplary idea capture screen 60 used by submitters to describe the details of their ideas. Web servers 26 communicate idea capture screen 60 to submission computers 6 for data input. For example, idea capture screen 60 can be defined in hypertext markup language (HTML) for capturing data via a web browser.

Idea capture screen 60 includes a number of input areas for objectively capturing information relating to the idea. For example, in input area 62, the submitter enters his or her name, manager's initials and a brief description of the idea. In addition, the submitter provides a more detailed description, potential roadblocks and whether the idea relates to either a new product or an existing product. In input area 64, the submitter selects a business function and a business

unit that the idea will most impact. Input area 66 indicates the stage and general status of the idea. Using configuration modules 28, the process developer can customize idea capture screen 60 to capture other data.

Figure 6 illustrates an exemplary evaluation screen 70 used to evaluate an idea. Web servers 26 communicate evaluation screen 70 to evaluation computers 10 for data input. For example, evaluation screen 70 can be defined in hypertext markup language (HTML) for capturing data via a web browser.

Evaluation screen 70 provides a summary 72 of the data entered by the submitter. In addition, evaluation screen 70 includes a number of input areas in which the evaluator supplies relevant information. For example, a first evaluator may supply market information relating in input area 74. A second evaluator may supply technical information in input area 76. Using configuration modules 28, the process developer can create similar evaluation screens for each stage of the evaluation hierarchy.

The inventive idea evaluation techniques and systems described herein can be implemented in digital electronic circuitry, or in computer hardware, firmware, software, or in combinations of them. Furthermore, the invention can be implemented in a computer program tangibly embodied in a machine-readable storage device for execution by a programmable processor within an operating environment of a programmable system.

Figure 7 illustrates a programmable computing system (system) 100 that provides an operating environment suitable for implementing the techniques described above. The system 100 includes a processor 112 that in one embodiment belongs to the PENTIUM<sup>®</sup> family of microprocessors manufactured by the Intel Corporation of Santa Clara, California. However, the invention can be implemented on computers based upon other microprocessors, such as the MIPS<sup>®</sup> family of microprocessors from the Silicon Graphics Corporation, the POWERPC<sup>®</sup> family of microprocessors from both the Motorola Corporation and the IBM Corporation, the PRECISION ARCHITECTURE<sup>®</sup> family of microprocessors from the Hewlett-Packard Company, the SPARC<sup>®</sup> family of microprocessors from the Sun Microsystems Corporation, or the ALPHA<sup>®</sup> family of microprocessors from the Compaq Computer Corporation. In various configurations, system 100

represents any server, personal computer, laptop or even a battery-powered, pocket-sized, mobile computer known as a hand-held PC or personal digital assistant (PDA).

System 100 includes system memory 113, including read only memory (ROM) 114 and random access memory (RAM) 115, which is connected to the processor 112 by a system data/address bus 116. ROM 114 represents any device that is primarily read-only including electrically erasable programmable read-only memory (EEPROM), flash memory, etc. RAM 115 represents any random access memory such as Synchronous Dynamic Random Access Memory.

Within the system 100, input/output bus 118 is connected to the data/address bus 116 via bus controller 119. In one embodiment, input/output bus 118 is implemented as a standard Peripheral Component Interconnect (PCI) bus. The bus controller 119 examines all signals from the processor 112 to route the signals to the appropriate bus. Signals between the processor 112 and the system memory 113 are merely passed through the bus controller 119. However, signals from the processor 112 intended for devices other than system memory 113 are routed onto the input/output bus 118.

Various devices are connected to the input/output bus 118 including hard disk drive 120, floppy drive 121 that is used to read floppy disk 151, and optical drive 122, such as a CD-ROM drive that is used to read an optical disk 152. The video display 124 or other kind of display device is connected to the input/output bus 118 via a video adapter 125.

Users enter commands and information into the system 100 by using a keyboard 140 and/or pointing device, such as a mouse 142, which are connected to bus 118 via input/output ports 128. Other types of pointing devices (not shown) include track pads, track balls, joysticks, data gloves, head trackers, and other devices suitable for positioning a cursor on the video display 124.

System 100 also includes a modem 129. Although illustrated as external to the system 100, those of ordinary skill in the art will quickly recognize that the modem 129 may also be internal to the system 100. Network interface 153 or modem 129 are typically used to communicate over a network (not shown), such as the global Internet, using either a wired or wireless connection.

Software applications 136 and data are typically stored via one of the memory storage devices, which may include the hard disk 120, floppy disk 151, CD-ROM 152 and are copied to RAM 115 for execution. In one embodiment, however, software applications 136 are stored in ROM 114 and are copied to RAM  
5 115 for execution or are executed directly from ROM 114.

In general, the operating system 135 executes software applications 136 and carries out instructions issued by the user. For example, when the user wants to load a software application 136, the operating system 135 interprets the instruction and causes the processor 112 to load software application 136 into RAM 115 from  
10 either the hard disk 120 or the optical disk 152. Once one of the software applications 136 is loaded into the RAM 115, it can be used by the processor 112. In case of large software applications 136, processor 112 loads various portions of program modules into RAM 115 as needed.

The Basic Input/Output System (BIOS) 117 for the system 100 is a set of  
15 basic executable routines that have conventionally helped to transfer information between the computing resources within the system 100. Operating system 135 or other software applications 136 use these low-stage service routines. In one embodiment system 100 includes a registry (not shown) that is a system database that holds configuration information for system 100. For example, the Windows®  
20 operating system by Microsoft Corporation of Redmond, Washington, maintains the registry in two hidden files, called USER.DAT and SYSTEM.DAT, located on a permanent storage device such as an internal disk.

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:
  - storing configuration data defining a number of evaluation stages and corresponding evaluation criteria;
  - 5 receiving input data describing an idea;
  - generating an evaluation screen as a function of a current evaluation stage of the idea, wherein the evaluation screen provides an interface to receive evaluation data for the respective evaluation criteria of the current stage; and
  - 10 modifying the current stage of the idea as a function of the evaluation data.
2. The method of claim 1 further including selecting one or more evaluators from a database of evaluator information, wherein the evaluator  
15 information includes identities and areas of expertise for the evaluators.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the evaluation data indicates whether each evaluator approves or rejects the idea.
- 20 4. The method of claim 3 further including repeating the steps of generating the evaluation screen and modifying the current stage if the evaluators approve of the idea.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein receiving input data describing an idea  
25 includes categorizing the idea into one of a number of user-configurable categories.
6. The method of claim 5, wherein selecting the evaluators includes selecting the evaluators as a function of the idea's category.
- 30 7. The method of claim 1 further including storing the input data describing the idea in a database.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the input data includes presenting a web page to a web browser over a packet-based network.
- 5 9. The method of claim 1, wherein displaying a capture screen includes communicating a web page to a web browser over a packet-based network.
10. The method of claim 1 further including communicating configuration screens to a web browser over a packet-based network such that the user  
10 can configure the number of stages in the evaluation process.
11. The method of claim 2 further including communicating configuration screens to a web browser over a packet-based network such that the user  
15 can configure the selection of evaluators at each stage by defining necessary areas of expertise at each stage.
12. A computer-readable medium having instructions stored thereon to cause a programmable processor to perform the method of claim 1.
- 20 13. A computer-readable medium having instructions stored thereon to cause a programmable processor to perform the method of claims 2 through 11.
14. A computer-readable medium having data structures stored thereon comprising:  
25 an idea data structure to store a description of an idea;  
an evaluator data structure to store identities of evaluators authorized to evaluate the idea; and  
a configuration data structure to store configuration data defining a hierarchical evaluation process.
- 30 15. The computer-readable medium of claim 14, wherein the evaluator data structure stores an area of expertise for the evaluator.

16. The computer-readable medium of claim 14, wherein the configuration data structure stores a data value defining the number of stages within the evaluation process.
- 5
17. The computer-readable medium of claim 14, wherein the configuration data structure stores evaluation criteria for each stage of the evaluation process.
18. A system comprising:
- 10           a database to store idea data and configuration data, wherein the configuration data defines a number of evaluation stages and corresponding evaluation criteria for each stage; and
- a web server to generate an evaluation screen as a function of a current evaluation stage of one of the ideas, wherein the evaluation screen
- 15           provides an interface to receive evaluation data for the evaluation criteria of the current stage.
19. The system of claim 18, wherein the web server updates the current stage of the idea as a function of the evaluation criteria.

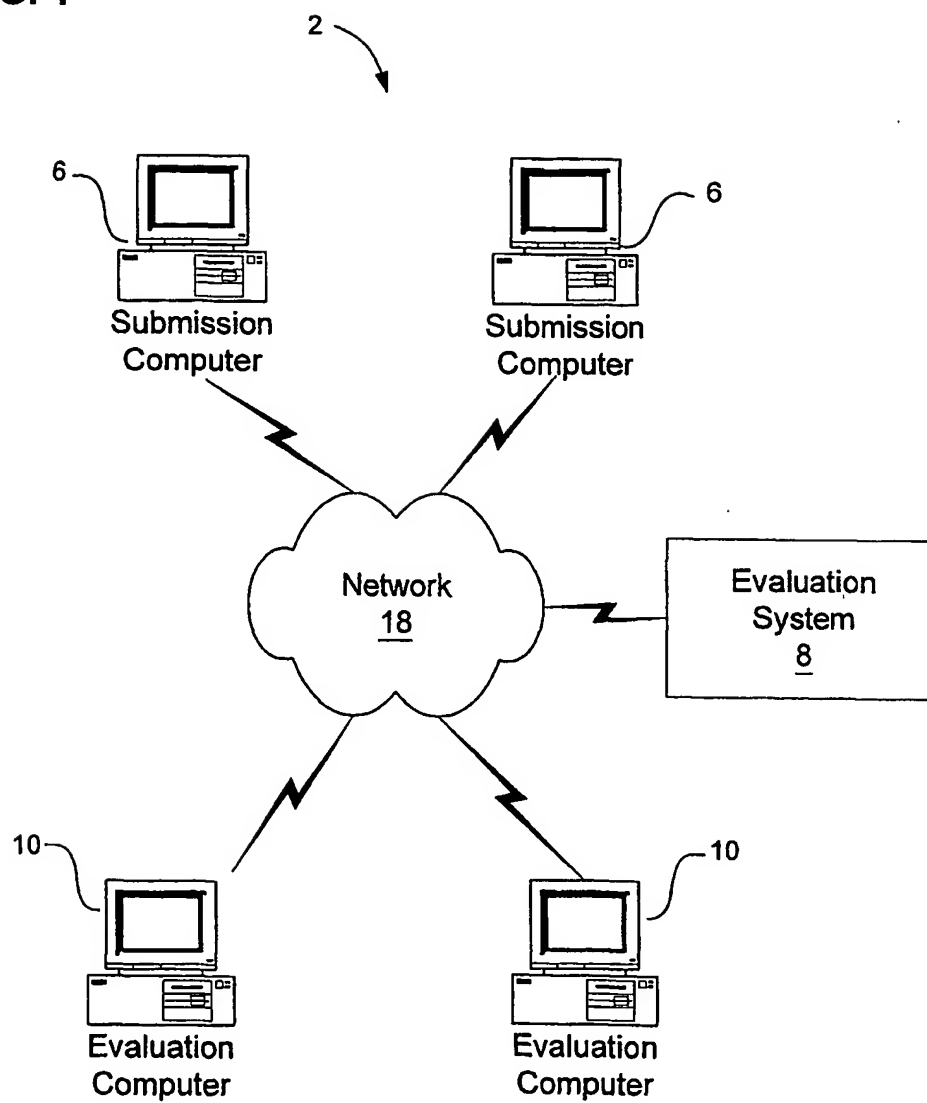
20



20. The system of claim 18, wherein the web server is configured to store the evaluation data in the database.
21. The system of claim 18, wherein the database is configured to store  
5 identities of evaluators to provide the evaluation data, and further wherein the identities are organized within the database by areas of expertise.
22. The system of claim 18, wherein the evaluation data indicates whether each evaluator approves or rejects the idea.  
10
23. The system of claim 19, further including evaluation software executing in an operating environment of the web server, wherein the evaluation software selects one or more evaluators at each stage as a function of the evaluator's are of expertise.  
15
24. The system of claim 20, wherein the idea data includes user-configurable categories.
25. The system of claim 23, wherein the web server generates configuration  
20 screens by which a user can configure the number of stages in the evaluation process.
26. The system of claim 24, wherein the web server is configured to  
25 communicate the configuration screens to a web browser over a packet-based network such that the user can configure the selection of evaluators at each stage by defining necessary areas of expertise at each stage.

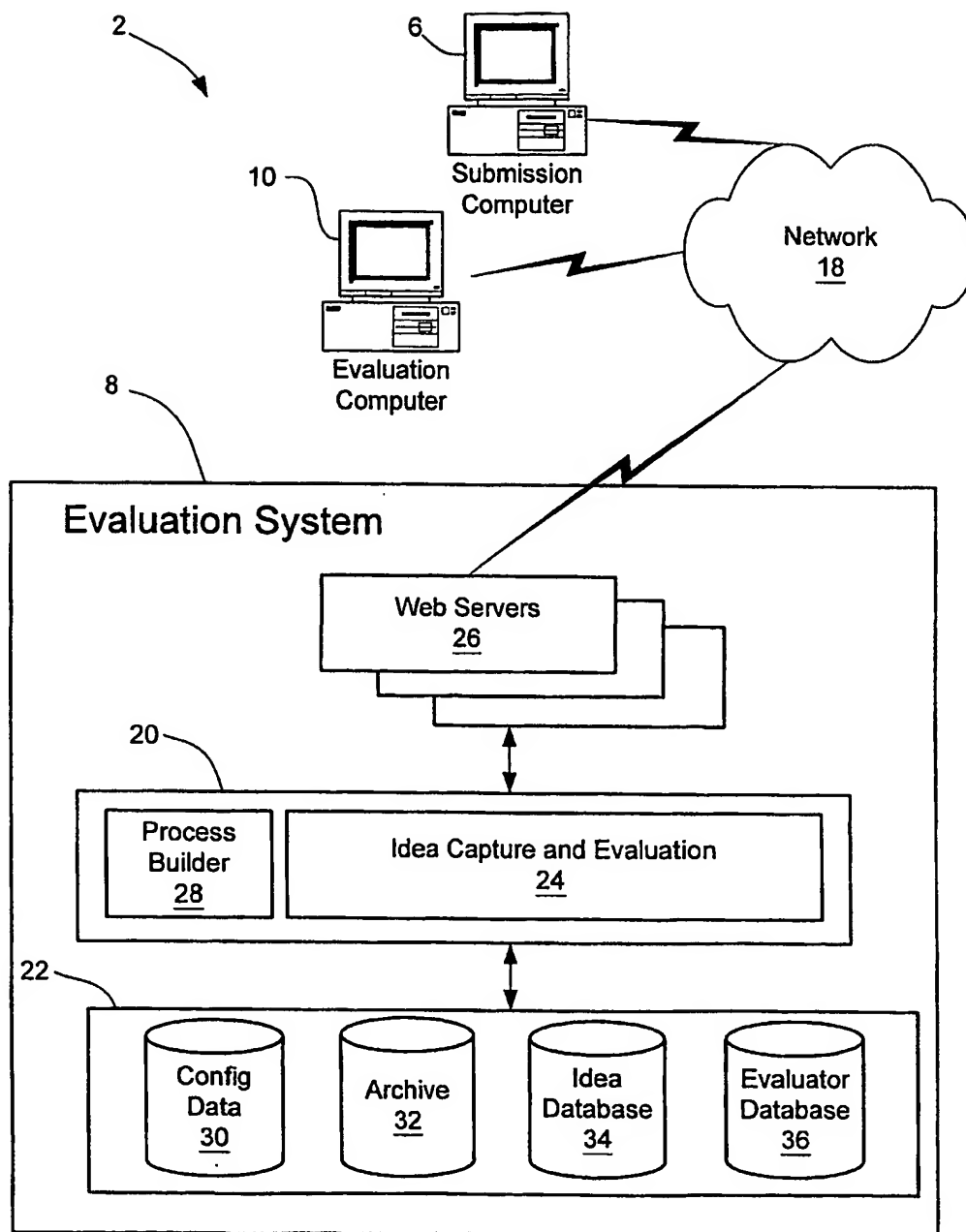
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FIG. 1



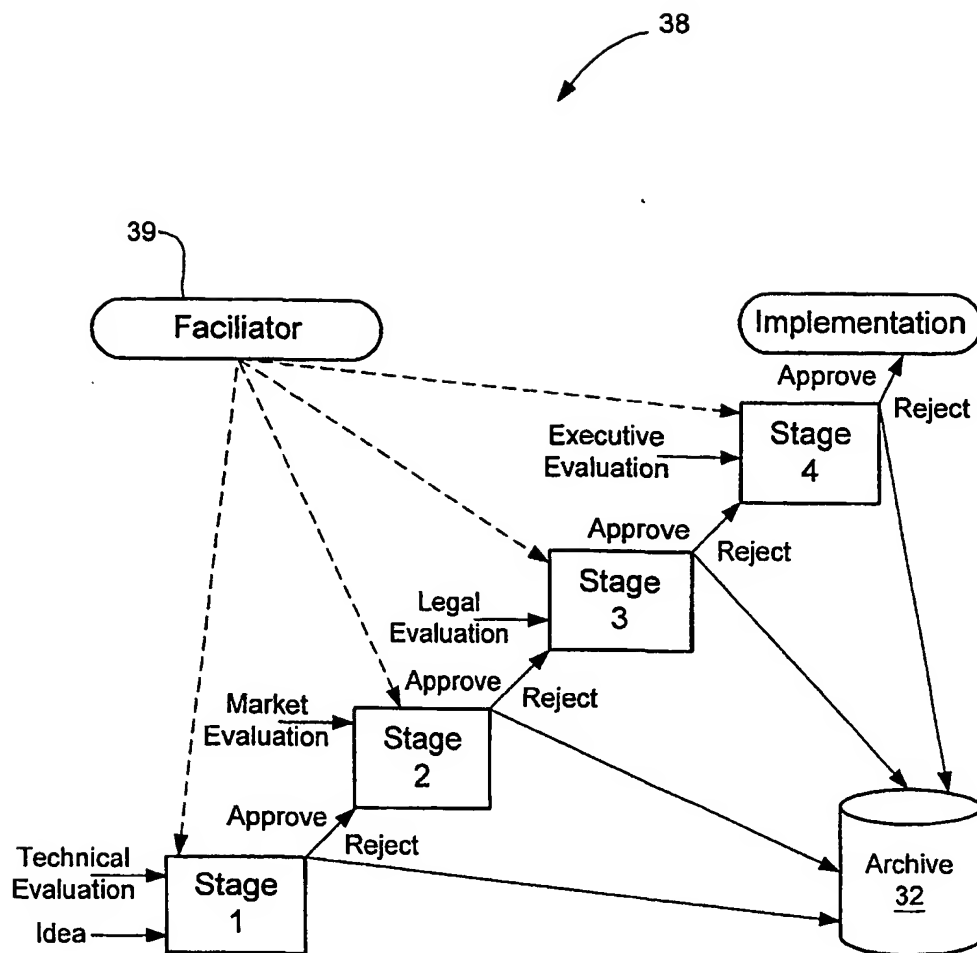
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FIG. 2



3/7

FIG. 3



4/7

FIG. 4

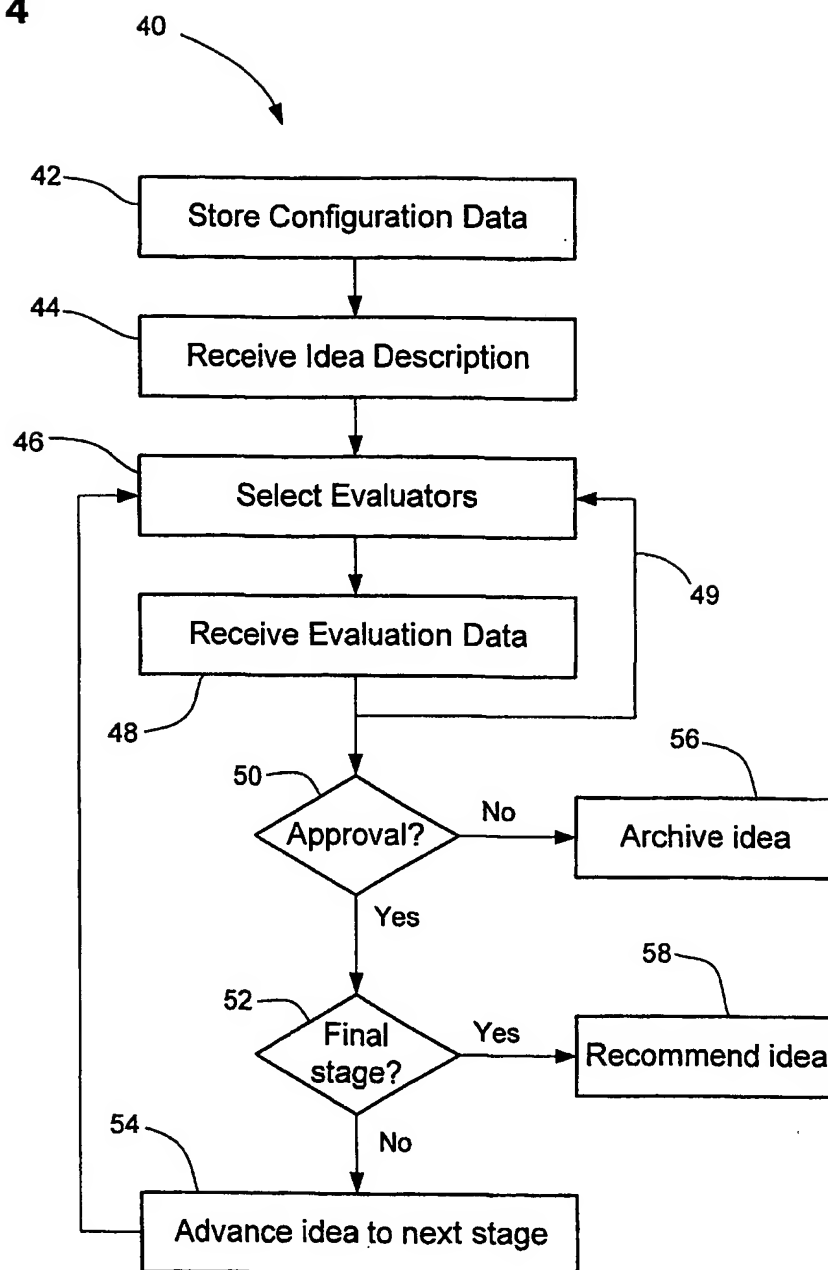


FIG. 5

60

### Sample Idea Capture Screen

Date created: 04/27/2000

62 You first and last name:

Brief description of your idea:

Detailed description including

- source of idea
- effect on customer
- potential roadblocks
- benefit to organization

Is this an idea for a new product? Yes ☐ No ☐

Is this an idea for a new application of an existing product? Yes ☐ No ☐

Is this idea for a new market? Yes ☐ No ☐

Your idea will have the highest impact on which of our existing products?

Select a category for this idea:

- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ Human Resource
- ☐ I/T
- ☐ Quality Assurance
- ☐ R & D
- ☐ Sales
- ☐ Technical Services

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What business unit will benefit:

66 Stage: *Stage 0*

Status: *Hold*

FIG. 6

70

72

**Stage Zero Questions**

Summary

Date created: 04/27/2000

Submitter: Jon Smith

Brief description: Method for synchronizing files

Detailed description: Source: central research  
Benefit: An easy to use file synchronization system for sharing information between a handheld computer system and a personal computer system. The system is activated by a single button.

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Opportunity

Benefit to customer: Solution to existing need

Value to organization: Complimentary to existing products

Market size: \$100 million in 1999

Market growth: 25% projected next for years

Potential customer: Laptop computer manufacturers

Competitive products: None

76

Feasibility

Resources: 10 - 12 programmers

Roadblocks: wireless bandwidth

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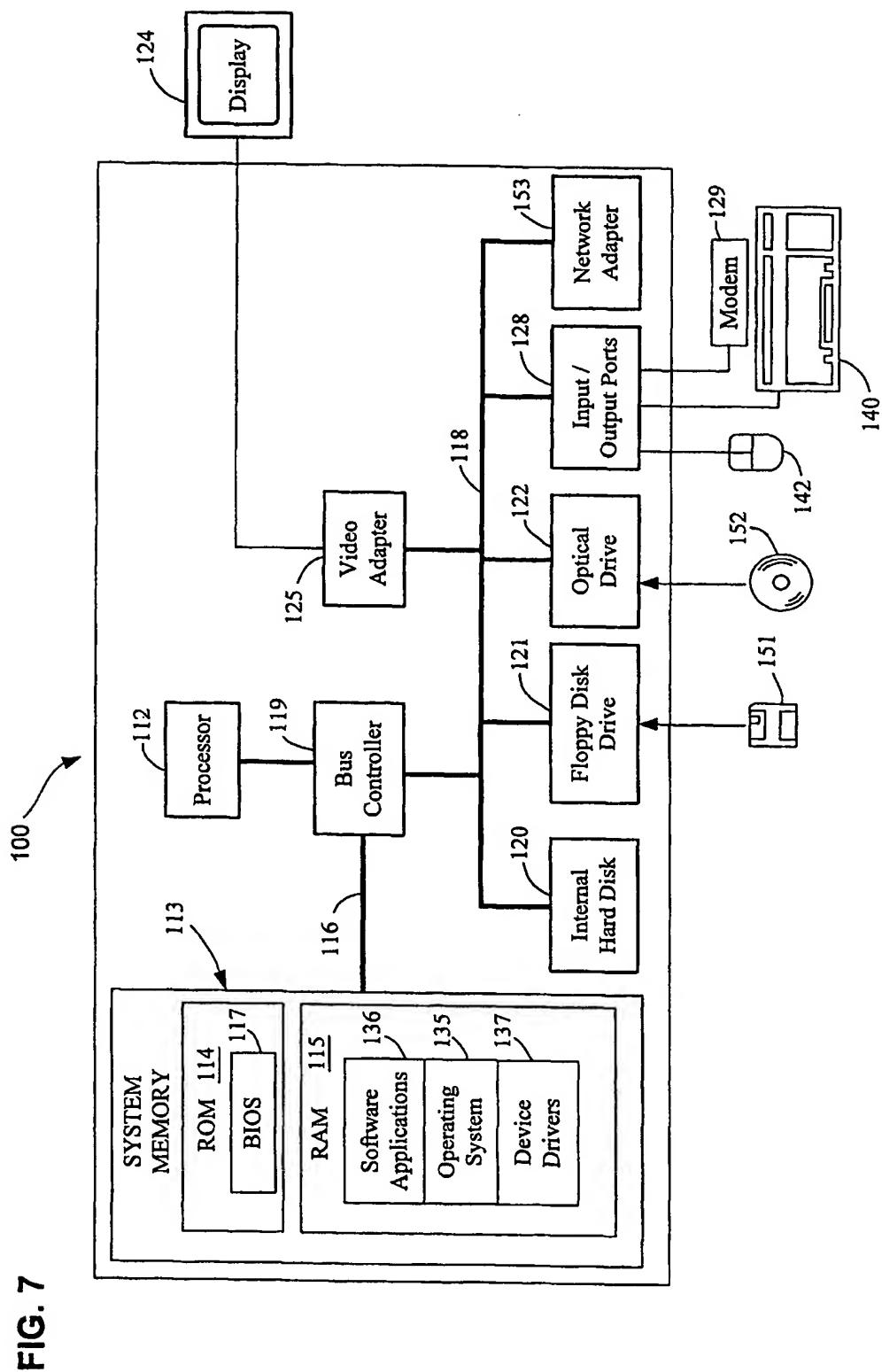


FIG. 7



REVISED VERSION

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(54) Title: IDEA CAPTURE AND EVALUATION

(57) Abstract:

# PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

## PCT

### DECLARATION OF NON-ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 17(2)(a), Rules 13ter.1(c) and Rule 39)


Applicant's or agent's file reference <b>1017-013W001</b>	IMPORTANT DECLARATION	Date of mailing (day/month/year) <b>17/01/2002</b>
International application No. <b>PCT/US 01/ 16240</b>	International filing date (day/month/year) <b>18/05/2001</b>	(Earliest) Priority date (day/month/year) <b>14/06/2000</b>
International Patent Classification (IPC) or both national classification and IPC <b>G06F17/60</b>		
Applicant <b>CARGILL INCORPORATED</b>		

This International Searching Authority hereby declares, according to Article 17(2)(a), that **no international search report will be established** on the international application for the reasons indicated below

1. ☒ The subject matter of the international application relates to:
  - a. ☐ scientific theories.
  - b. ☐ mathematical theories
  - c. ☐ plant varieties.
  - d. ☐ animal varieties.
  - e. ☐ essentially biological processes for the production of plants and animals, other than microbiological processes and the products of such processes.
  - f. ☒ schemes, rules or methods of doing business.
  - g. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of performing purely mental acts.
  - h. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of playing games.
  - i. ☐ methods for treatment of the human body by surgery or therapy.
  - j. ☐ methods for treatment of the animal body by surgery or therapy.
  - k. ☐ diagnostic methods practised on the human or animal body.
  - l. ☐ mere presentations of information.
  - m. ☐ computer programs for which this International Searching Authority is not equipped to search prior art.
  
2. ☐ The failure of the following parts of the international application to comply with prescribed requirements prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:
 

☐ the description
☐ the claims
☐ the drawings.
  
3. ☐ The failure of the nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing to comply with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:
 

☐ the written form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.
 ☐ the computer readable form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.
  
4. Further comments:

Name and mailing address of the International Searching Authority  European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL-2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer <b>Lucia Van Pinxteren</b>
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## FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 203

The claims relate to subject matter for which no search is required according to Rule 39 PCT. Given that the claims are formulated in terms of such subject matter or merely specify commonplace features relating to its technological implementation, the search examiner could not establish any technical problem which might potentially have required an inventive step to overcome. Hence it was not possible to carry out a meaningful search into the state of the art (Art. 17(2)(a)(i) and (ii) PCT; see Guidelines Part B Chapter VIII, 1-6).

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that claims relating to inventions in respect of which no international search report has been established need not be the subject of an international preliminary examination (Rule 66.1(e) PCT). The applicant is advised that the EPO policy when acting as an International Preliminary Examining Authority is normally not to carry out a preliminary examination on matter which has not been searched. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the claims are amended following receipt of the search report or during any Chapter II procedure. If the application proceeds into the regional phase before the EPO, the applicant is reminded that a search may be carried out during examination before the EPO (see EPO Guideline C-VI, 8.5), should the problems which led to the Article 17(2) declaration be overcome.